

Suggested Remarks
USAID Economic Growth Advisor Robert F. Barnes
BIP Turn-over Ceremony
Marbel Proper Box Culvert
Matalam, North Cotabato Province
07 September 2006

Gov. Manny Piñol,
Mayor Valdevieso,
USG and GEM Program Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure and a privilege to be here with you all today, as we conduct the ceremonial turnover of another Barangay Infrastructure Project, the Marbel Proper Box Culvert.

This facility is one of 800 small-scale infrastructure and post-harvest facility projects that USAID, in partnership with the Government of the Philippines, is planning to

build by August of 2007, through our Growth with Equity in Mindanao, or GEM Program.

These types of small facilities, as well as a number of larger infrastructure improvements that we will also support, all aim to help improve the quality of life in the beneficiary communities. They also complement other important efforts that the U.S. Government and our Philippine partners are conducting in the areas of microfinance, improved governance, education, family planning, health and nutrition, environmental management, and renewable energy.

While this simple facility will provide the residents of Barangays Marbel and Ilian, with a

box culvert to facilitate the access of people and products to and from this area, it can also serve a larger purpose. It can demonstrate that the partnership between a community and our two governments -- mutually committed to peace and prosperity in Mindanao -- can achieve true progress, and real results. Thanks to these partnerships, we see before us today a concrete expression of the benefits of peace.

We are truly pleased to be able to help those who are committed to peace and who have the vision to see a brighter tomorrow for this barangay, the Municipality of Matalam, the Province of North Cotabato, Mindanao and the Philippines.

Thank you.